

Hot Tips

Good info for the new ham, and old stuff to refresh your memory



VHF / UHF equipment questions

Many of us who are new to ham radio, get our start using the **2-meter band**, which is a subset of the **VHF band**. This means frequencies starting with 14, such as 146.520, but this Q&A can be applied to the **UHF band** as well. Simply put, this is a short list of many of the questions that you, as a new ham, might ask about VHF / UHF equipment:

Do I need to get a better radio?

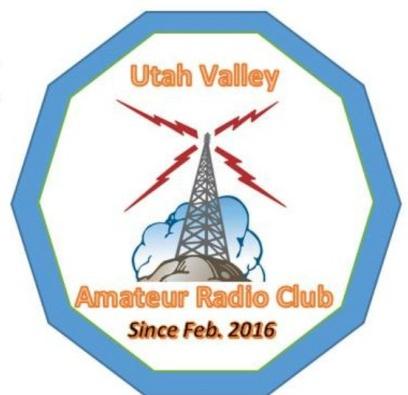
If your HT (handheld transceiver) has been working well for you, maybe not. But if you believe a little extra power can help you get your signal out farther, then a **mobile radio**, used as a desktop base, might be what you need. Then again, if your signal is not reaching others as well as you hope it would, you might benefit by investing in a better antenna.

Should I get a digital radio?

There is quite a lot of talk about digital radio modes on the VHF / UHF bands, such as DMR, C4FM (Yaesu System Fusion), D*STAR, AllStar, and others. If you feel like joining the fun of digital modes, by all means, purchase an appropriate radio. But, be sure to get one that's familiar to people in your club or area, in case you have questions or run into trouble, because often, neither Google nor YouTube will have all the answers you're looking for.

Should I log my contacts?

You can, if you want to, but you might find that it'll become somewhat tedious, due to the numerous contacts you'll make on VHF and UHF. Logging is an activity that's typically more appropriate on the **HF bands**, which tend to lend themselves better to making international or rare contacts. And if you do log your contacts, be sure to use a desktop, mobile, or online app (such as [N3FJP](#) or [N1MM](#) or [QRZ](#)) to do the job.



Do I need to get a tuner?

If you have a store-bought antenna, you will not need to purchase a tuner, unless there's something wrong with your antenna, in which case you should just replace your antenna. If you're using a home-built VHF / UHF antenna, you only need to install a home-made matching device, if it needs tuning.

Do I need to get a watt meter or an SWR meter?

While it won't hurt to purchase a meter, you really won't need one. Typically, your radio's power output is set to particular levels, and the only time you might need to monitor that, or your antenna system SWR, is when your antenna is not performing well, in which case it might be more beneficial to purchase a better antenna.

Should I purchase an amplifier?

You could, if you want to, although a VHF amplifier is somewhat hard-to-find or is often more expensive and takes up more room than a mobile radio. But, if you need that extra punch to reach a distant station, you might just find that you'll get out farther by investing in a better antenna.

Do I need to get a better antenna?

The answer is a thundering **YES!** If all you have is a **stock antenna** (in other words, the antenna that came with your HT), you'll likely do much better with a **whip antenna**, or even a rooftop antenna connected to your radio by coaxial cable.

Are you sensing a pattern here? While not all your questions can be answered by getting hold of a better antenna, purchasing or making one yourself is probably the best first step toward improving your VHF / UHF station.